

crisis stability, but they do not acknowledge the imprudence of substituting nuclear forces for more expensive conventional strength. Nor do they deny legitimacy to first-use threats.

If these continue to be acceptable aims for the nuclear programs of both parties, even after their own overarching confrontation has ended, there is simply no logical argument for denying either the legitimacy or reasonableness of nuclear arsenals sized and shaped to the same ends in other countries. This is especially true for countries such as Pakistan and Israel, who face regional opponents with much larger conventional forces. This, after all was the historic rationale for NATO's reliance on first-use nuclear threats.

Just how dangerous would a world of expanded proliferation be? In such a world, would another 40 years of limited wars and nuclear threats pass again without any of those weapons exploding on people? One answer might be: "Why not? Deterrence has worked, and chances are that it will continue to work among new nuclear states as among the old." This argument's assumption that "deterrence has worked" *safely enough* in the past demands a closer look.

It is mistaken to believe, as most Americans do, that no U.S. nuclear weapons have ever been used since the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. American presidents, in particular, have used nuclear weapons in crises and limited wars on more than 20 occasions in Indochina, East Asia, Berlin, and the Middle East. They have used them in the way a gun is used when it is pointed at someone's head in a confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled.⁸

It's hard to exaggerate the difference that a real change in the direction of American influence might possibly make in the world.

The Soviet Union, Israel,⁹ and India and Pakistan have used nuclear weapons in the same way. Most recently in the Gulf War, not one of the four nuclear states militarily involved refrained from threatening to use its nuclear arsenal. Under public questioning, high U.S. and other Allied officials pointedly refused to rule out the possible first-use of their nuclear weapons against Iraq under various circumstances: in particular, if the Iraqis used chemical weapons extensively, which was regarded as highly likely.¹⁰ Published polls,

surely read as a threat in Baghdad, revealed 45 percent of Americans approved using "tactical nuclear weapons against Iraq if it might save the lives of U.S. troops."¹¹

These high levels of support for possible nuclear first-use against a non-nuclear opponent, three to four times higher than any recorded during any point of the Korean or Vietnam Wars, probably reflected new public confidence that such an initiative would no longer risk a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange. That confidence could unleash more such threats, with increased willingness to carry them out, in the post-Cold War era. Likewise, the inference that these threats were successful in deterring Iraq from using any of its large supply of chemical shells, bombs or warheads in the Gulf War could encourage both proliferation and imitation of such threats in future conflicts.

The contrasting thought, among Third World observers, that Iraq might have been spared both these threats and the heavy bombing it received if Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon had already been successful, is yet another spur to proliferation. New nuclear states are likely to use the same ambiguous first-use threats, in the same ways and with the same risks of provocation, commitment, and escalation.

This argument rejects the condescending implication that significant risk of nuclear war would emerge for the first time with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by "irresponsible, immature" leaders in the Third World. But it also presumes that the risk of nuclear war has been higher over the last 40 years than the world public was allowed to learn. With nuclear weapons in the hands of a greater number of leaders, individually no more but no less reckless than most American presidents of the last half-century, the long-term risk of nuclear explosions is higher still. That is no basis for complacency.

Curtailing Proliferation: A "Demand-side" Approach

Trying to close off all technological access to nuclear weapons will never be enough to discourage others from following America's and NATO's nuclear example. The current "supply side" approach, by itself, can not succeed. An essential effort to reduce the *demand* for nuclear weapons must resolve existing regional conflicts, as in the Middle East and South Asia, and provide effective alternatives to military means and reduce decisively global causes of war. More narrowly, Manhattan Project II must bring about changes in official U.S. nuclear policies that now *enhance* the demand for nuclear

American bomb project. The alternative to an effective Manhattan Project II may be a global profusion of Manhattan Project I's.

More recently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the desperate shortage of foreign exchange and the erosion of centralized authority and discipline in the former Soviet empire has presented the ominous possibility of a hemorrhaging abroad of nuclear technology, materials, perhaps finished weapons, and almost certainly nuclear expertise. The nuclear option may come to be much cheaper, easier, quicker, safer than ever before, both for countries that have already secretly been pursuing it and for others considering joining the club.

Meanwhile, U.S. policies that have long tended to encourage proliferation continue. These include long-term selective tolerance for some covert nuclear weapons programs in, for example, Israel, India, South Africa and, until last year, Pakistan and Iraq.⁵ Moreover, the U.S. maintains a massive nuclear arsenal after the end of the Cold War, resists radical cuts, and persists with nuclear testing in the face of a Commonwealth test moratorium. It insists on its right, and that of its NATO allies, to threaten or implement initiation of nuclear attack against non-nuclear challenges.

Beyond this, U.S. policies continue to endorse the notion that the relative size of nuclear arsenals is an essential badge of status. The Administration is determined to maintain nuclear "superpower" standing, insisting on a U.S. arsenal that is an order of magnitude larger than, and is projected always to remain "superior" to, all others apart from Russia. Likewise, the U.S. is providing crucial support to the anachronistic British program to triple its own nuclear force.

All these expressions of nuclear policy in the absence now of any serious military threats to national security encourage potential nuclear states to regard nuclear weapons in the same way as the United States and its major allies: as having vital, multiple, legitimate uses, as well as being unparalleled symbols of sovereignty, status, and power.

More dangerously, such potential proliferators are led by past and present American behavior to consider among the possible uses of nuclear weapons the threat of initiating first-use policies. Such a prospect challenges states to acquire nuclear capabilities of their own, and perhaps even to enter a regional nuclear arms race—mimicking past superpower folly—to be able to threaten, deter or preempt nuclear attack.

eral or mutual reductions and constraints that would come close to embodying this policy.

President Yeltsin has suggested mutual cuts in strategic weapons down to 2,500 or 2,000 warheads. President Bush proposed a limit of 4,500 warheads. These lowered but enormously high levels still reflect a traditional preemptive first-strike approach aimed at supposedly limiting damage to the attacker in an escalation to all-out war. Either level is far in excess of what could be justified by the requirements of the single goal of deterring nuclear attack.

There is no precise, objective figure that can be given for the force requirement for this single goal. Dr. Herbert York, echoing McGeorge Bundy, has made a plausible argument that the number needed to deter the kind of adversary who can be deterred at all is "somewhere in the range of 1, 10, or 100" survivable, deliverable warheads. He adds that it is "closer to 1 than it is to 100."¹² President Yeltsin's proposal for Russia's "deterrent" force would exceed this limit by twenty times, and would remain four times larger than the current or proposed arsenals of Britain or France. It is therefore understandable that those countries have resisted President Yeltsin's proposals that they begin simultaneously reducing their own forces on the basis of a common "principle of minimum defense sufficiency."

The United States currently can bring even less moral force to bear against creation or expansion of other national nuclear arsenals. To be sure, Secretary of Defense Cheney has started to talk the language of minimum deterrence—"We're moving into a new era where clearly the impetus is to shrink the stockpiles on both sides and going down to some minimal level that's required for maintaining our deterrent capability," he said recently to Pentagon reporters.¹³ But the same day that quotation appeared in print, Cheney criticized President Yeltsin's proposed ceiling of 2,500 warheads as inadequate. It seems evident that U.S. officials do not yet accept any standard of "minimum defense sufficiency" that could put pressure on the British, French, Chinese, or Israeli arsenals.

Indeed, it would be interesting to hear President Bush or Secretary Cheney explain why, if both sides have the same number of weapons, the U.S. would prefer that the Russians have 4,000 warheads, rather than 2,000 or less, within range of U.S. targets. Secretary Cheney frequently questions whether future Russian regimes will be as unthreatening or as cooperative as the present one. Precisely for that reason, it is urgent for the United States to get commitments from the

Project, precisely the right time to create Manhattan Project II.

The task of the second Manhattan Project is, as quickly and completely as possible, to undo the legacy of the first: *to free the earth of the threat of nuclear war.*

Devising practical solutions and programs for freeing the world from nuclear threats and ridding it of most or all of its nuclear weapons has more varied political, psychological and physical dimensions than the original project. It faces even more obstacles. It is the very complexity and interdisciplinary nature of these tasks, along with their importance and urgency, that suggests the model of the Manhattan Project.

In contrast to the original, the new project would need to be overt and international, including Third World participants. Ideally, it would be a high-priority project of governments from the start. But while the major republics of the former Soviet Union, including Russia, seem now to share a commitment to the goals described above, that is not true of the present U.S. administration. While some countries might collaborate in the effort at a high governmental level from the outset, United States participation would initially have to be organized outside of government.

This is not a serious limitation on performing the conceptual and planning work of Manhattan Project II. More than enough American and international expertise exists outside government for these functions. But it means that, unlike the one fifty years ago, the project would not be operational and managerial from its beginning. Indeed, it would have to address how to bring about societal and ultimately executive branch understanding of (and consensus on) its goals and programs. This will take more, this time, than the equivalent of an Einstein-Szilard letter to President Roosevelt. There is no time to lose.

Manhattan Project II cannot uninvent nuclear weapons. It cannot prevent later-generation weapons if development and testing, once ended, should later be resumed. Even physical elimination of all existing weapons, if that should come about, could not indefinitely prevent their return. The work of the original project will not ever be entirely undone. The danger it bequeathed can never be reduced to zero.

But these truisms do not mean that anything like the present levels of danger should be tolerated any longer. In a meaningful sense, *near-abolition* of nuclear weapons, 95–99 percent dismantlement,

- Eliminate multiple-warhead (MIRV'd) land-based missiles and existing silo-busting sub-based warheads, and seek a mutual interim ceiling on total U.S. and Russian strategic weapons of no more than 1,000 warheads, preferably 500 or 100.

Since all of these steps, except for the last two, were proposed on a bilateral basis by former Soviet President Gorbachev in October, 1991 with the concurrence of Russian President Yeltsin and the leaders of the other republics, there is every reason to expect that they would promptly be matched by Russia and the rest of the Commonwealth.

The ABM treaty adherence runs counter to suggestions by President Yeltsin in early February as well as to the long-held position of President Bush, but it is important in order to avert later pressures to reintroduce MIRV-ing and to renew the strategic offensive arms race.

Very early in this first year the United States must address the need for reciprocal transparency. Thus, as a precursor to the other steps:

- The United States should propose the verifiable registration of all nuclear weapons in the world, including those in the United States. It should offer funding from its defense budget this year for registering and tagging, as quickly as possible, all nuclear weapons in the Commonwealth, and for the safe storage and handling of weapons to be disabled and dismantled.
- U.S. facilities should be made open to the same international verification and monitoring procedures for the disarmament and dismantling process that are demanded of the Commonwealth and other nuclear states.

The three-year period of the original Manhattan project suggests the next target date; it would bring us to 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the Alamogordo test and the bombing of Hiroshima, the first demonstrations of nuclear destruction. 1995 is also the year of the Non-Proliferation Treaty renewal conference, which could be the beginning of the end of the formal nonproliferation regime if the programs above and below, in particular an end to testing, are not achieved.

By August, 1995: Mid-1995 should be the deadline for the permanent end of nuclear testing and the production of fissile material by

war between NATO and the former Warsaw Pact powers has virtually vanished, the chance that some nuclear weapons will kill humans somewhere may be higher than before. Averting that catastrophe depends upon many things, including the activities of those, inside and outside of government, who believe that the era of nuclear danger should effectively end now—that it must and can decisively end, whether or not total physical abolition proves ultimately attainable.

Contrary to the opinion of some,² such an end is not automatic. It has not yet been assured, despite the momentum of the current “disarmament race.” This new race was admirably initiated by President Bush with his unilateral measures of September 27, 1991 and joined by Presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin.³ Welcome as they are, none of their moves and proposals, particularly on the U.S. side, shows a decisive shift away from Cold War notions of the broad functions of and requirements for nuclear weapons in “superpower” arsenals. None adopts an appropriate posture from which to discourage proliferation.

Such a shift in posture awaits fundamental changes in the present policies of the United States and its major allies, which must rest on a new way of thinking about nuclear weapons. That means, above all, admitting no legitimate use for them other than, for a few devices only, the deterrence of nuclear attack. And it means joining the Commonwealth of Independent States and virtually all the non-nuclear states in the world in regarding as illegitimate threats to initiate nuclear attacks—threats of “first use”—under any circumstances, and foregoing preparations or weapons designed to make such threats credible.

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We must come to see the existence of nuclear stockpiles beyond the lowest minimal deterrent level in any country, starting with the United States and Russia, as a threatening and urgent international problem, akin to global warming and ozone depletion, that needs to

Sciences (Washington, D.C., 1991); “The START Treaty and Beyond,” Congressional Budget Office, October, 1991; *Decisions for Defense: Prospects for a New Order*, William W. Kaufmann and John D. Steinbruner, The Brookings Institution (Washington, D.C. 1991); “The Nuclear Threat: A Proposal,” Hans A. Bethe, Kurt Gottfried, and Robert S. McNamara, *The New York Review*, June 27, 1991; “Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War,” Carl Kaysen, Robert S. McNamara and George Rathjens, *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991; “Counting the Costs of the Arms Race,” George Perkovich, *Foreign Policy* No. 85, Winter 1991-92; “U.S. Military Agenda for 1992 and Beyond,” *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XX, No. 6, 1991, Center for Defense Information, Washington, D.C.

⁵On Israel and Pakistan, see Gerard C. Smith and Helena Cobban, “A Blind Eye to Nuclear Proliferation,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3, Summer 1989. For much more on Israel and on the divergence between American officials’ private attitudes toward proliferation among friendly nations and U.S. declaratory policy opposing it, see the investigative study by Seymour M. Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, New York, 1991.

⁶Discussion with Andrei Kortunov, Institute for the Study of USA and Canada, September 27, 1991.

⁷See Stephen Meyer, “How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed: The Politicization of the Soviet Military,” *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Winter 1991/1992, p. 38.

⁸See the list of a dozen instances, with references, in “A Call to Mutiny,” Daniel Ellsberg, introduction to *Protest and Survive*, ed. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith (New York, 1981). A longer list, in an unpublished manuscript of 1986, is available from the author. A number of these episodes are discussed in *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, Richard K. Betts (Washington, D.C., 1987). Some of these threats—many of which were concealed, then and later, from the American public—were regarded by the presidents and some of their close advisers as successful. Others were not. Most of them were ambiguous, in greater or less degree. Some of the threats, successful or not, were regarded by the presidents as bluffs or partial bluffs; but in no case did that mean there was no danger of escalation.

⁹See Seymour M. Hersh, *op. cit.*, particularly Chapter 17, “Nuclear Blackmail,” on Israel’s threats in the 1973 Middle East war.

¹⁰William Tuohy, “Quayle Refuses to Rule Out U.S. Nuclear Attack,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1991, also citing General Schwarzkopf and Defense Secretary Cheney. See also Adam Raphael, “UK Will Go Nuclear If Forces Gassed, Claims Army Man,” *London Observer*, September 30, 1990.”

¹¹*Time*, December 10, 1990, p. 42; *Newsweek*, January 14, 1991, p. 17; George Black, “Just How Far is Bush Prepared to Go in War?” *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1991, p. M7.

¹²Herbert F. York, “‘Remarks’ about Minimum Deterrence,” Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, CTW-12-90, January 25, 1991. The reference